(c) whether it is a fact that forests in our country, predominantly Sal, are being gradually thinned out by the recurring forest fires, collection of leaves, etc.; and

(d) whether Government have constituted any Technology Mission on preventing and combating forest fires?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) and (b) Frequent and heavy forest fires cause serious damage to the regenerating seedlings of the forest species including Sal (Shorea robusta). It also adversely affects the soil moisture regime and nutrient balance. This results in change in vegetation profile of the forest type. This has been corroborated by the studies conducted by the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, Dehradun and other such institutes and universities conducting research on forest ecology.

(c) No, Sir. However, due to biotic pressure, forest fires are quite common in forest areas near villages. This results in degradation of forests which include the Sal forests.

(d) No, Sir. However, a National Master Plan for prevention and control of forest fires has been prepared by the Ministry of Environment and Forest. Based on it funds are being allocated to the State Governments under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme 'Forest Fire Control and Management' for combating forest fires. A national guidelines has also been issued to the State Governments for prevention and control of forest fires.

Pollution by air-conditioning equipments

†956. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that environment in cities and

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

metropolis has become poisonous due to the pollution caused by the growing use of air-conditioning equipments and motor vehicles;

(b) if so, the policy being adopted by Government to provide relief to the public from this problem;

(c) whether it is also a fact that even the trees being planted are affected by pollution; and

(d) if so, whether Government would give thrust to planting such trees which absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) and (b) The air pollution load in metropolitan cities is mainly due to vehicular emissions. Only very small amount is attributed to domestic equipments, including air-conditioners. A comprehensive Policy for Abatement of Pollution has been formulated which lays stress on both the control and preventive aspects of pollution.

(c) and (d) Certain plant species which are very sensitive to specific pollutants do get adversely affected. A project "Green Belt for Abatement of Pollution and Environment Improvement" has been launched. The Central Pollution Control Board has brought out the guidelines for developing the green belt in urban areas.

Publicity to notifications for reservation/de-reservation of forests

957. SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that notifications issued by Government for reservation and de-reservation of forest areas from time to time are not brought to the notice of the general public through media publicity;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor;

(c) what is Government's programme for rehabilitation of people and the industry affected, by declaring reserve forests in metropolitan cities;